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THREE & 3
DIALOGUES,

BETWEEN A

Minister and one of his *Hearers* :

89 + K ON THE

True PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION,

AND

Salvation for Sinners by JESUS CHRIST,

THE

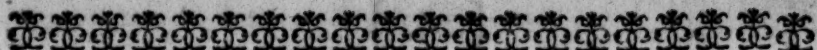
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D I A L O G U E I.

M.  A R M E R, good-morrow. I find you have been early up, and diligently employed; Your Cattle are fed, and Servants at Work. I see Thriving in the World is a matter very near your Heart.

H. Ay, Sir, all this is necessary. Meat and Cloaths must be provided; the Landlord's Rent must be paid; and this requires much Care and Labour.

M. I would by no means discourage your Industry. It is your Duty to be *not slothful in Business*. But, you know, you have another Calling beside Husbandry: The Soul must be fed and cloathed too.

H. Doubtless the Soul ought to be minded in the first Place, for that is the chief Concern; But, I hope, I do not neglect my Soul and the World to come: I should be sorry you should think me so bad a Man: I believe you have no Reason.

M. No particular Reason to be suspicious of you rather than others. But when I look round, and observe the general unconcern about Salvation in which Men live, I am concerned for my Fellow-mortals: and with respect to you, who attend on my Ministry in particular, I think myself obliged to admonish you of your Danger, that you may not die before you have obtained Forgiveness of your Sins through Faith in JESUS CHRIST, and *an Inheritance among them that are sanctified*.

H. Lord! Sir, why should you entertain such uncharitable Thoughts of us?

M. Do not so abuse the Word *Charity*: It signifies the same as *Love*. Now Love does not require that we think well of every body with or without Reason, but that we wish and intend well to every body. If I gave myself no Trouble about you, that is, if I was utterly void of Charity, you would think me a very charitable Man.

H. But I hope you do not condemn us all; some of us indeed are wicked, swearing, drunken Men; but we are not all so. You know yourself that I live a sober Life; maintain a good Character. I never hurted any Man in my Life, and pay every Man his Due.

M. And upon this you build your Hopes of Heaven? — If this is your Foundation, I must plainly tell you, it will leave you hopeless in the Day of Trial. Let us examine it by the Word of God.

“ You never did any Hurt to any Man.” You mean, I suppose, you never robbed nor murdered any person: I do not think you have; but still you have committed much Sin, and done much Hurt, not only to others, but especially to your own Soul, by great and numberless, nay daily Offences against the holy Law of God: Nay you have broken every one of his Commandments.

H. Who could give you such an Account of me?

M. God in his Word, he declares that you and all Mankind *have sinned and come short of his Glory*, Rom. iii. 23. He therefore charges you with having broke every one of his Commandments.

H. I never committed *Idolatry, Murder, Adultery* —

M. Yes, all of them. Have you never loved any worldly Thing more than God and his Favour? nor feared any Thing more than his Displeasure, so as to neglect a known Duty rather than draw upon yourself some temporal Inconvenience? This was a Breach of the *First* Commandment. The *Second* Commandment respects the *Manner of expressing* the Devotion of the Heart; and therefore whatever in your Service has been unbecoming, such as *wandering Thoughts, Carelessness*; and *Irreverence*, as well as *using Images*, is a Breach of this Commandment: so is also neglect of God's Service, And here you will not pretend, I suppose, to be *Not Guilty*. Consequently, the best Things you ever did, being done in this manner deserves rather to be reckoned among your Sins, than trusted to for Justification before God. But a few Minutes ago, in my Hearing, you *took the Lord's Name in vain*, using it needlessly, and without an awful Sense of His Majesty, of whom you
spake.

Spake. You have done the same perhaps ten thousand times in your Life. This is a Breach of the *Third* Commandment. Whenever you have neglected to attend on God's Worship on the *Sabbath* without a necessary Hindrance; suffered worldly Thoughts to unfit you for God's Service; done worldly Business on that Day that might be done on another, and neglected to devote the Whole to God, by *Reading, Hearing, Prayer, Meditation, and useful Conversation*,—you have profaned the LORD's Day. The Substance of these Commandments, is, *Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy Heart*: But you have come short of this whenever you have not acted to the Glory of God. Now what think you of your innocence with respect to the Duties of the First Table?

H. I cannot pretend to justify myself with respect to God; but I am sure I have done no Hurt to *Man*.

M. You would not say so, if you understood the spirituality and extent of God's Commandments, as explained by our LORD in his *Sermon on the Mount*. There you find that *Concupiscence* in the Eye or Heart is esteemed *Adultery* in the sight of God! and causeless *Anger*, and especially injurious Language, is accounted a Degree of *Murder*: And who can acquit himself of these?

If you take the same Method to understand the other Commandments, all Parts of your Behaviour that are unsuitable to the Station in which Providence hath placed you, all *Irreverence* and proud censuring of your *Superiors*; and all unkind and injurious treatment of those that are *beneath* you, will appear to be breaches of the *fifth* Commandment. All *evil Speaking, rash Censuring, and repeating of Stories* injurious to the Characters of others, are contrary to the *Ninth*: And all *Murmuring and Discontent, Envy and Greediness*, are sins forbidden by the *Tenth*.

H. Then it seems there is but one Commandment against which I have not sinned.

M. If you rightly knew yourself and the Law of God, you would not acquit yourself of that neither. Be not offended, I speak out of Love to your Soul. I do

not think you a Thief or a Robber: Yet, have you never concealed the Faults and bad Properties of what you sold, when you knew that Ignorance of these Faults was the very Thing that induced the Person to buy? Nay, have you not often recommended your Goods in such general terms, as were inconsistent with strict Truth? Have you not cruelly taken Advantage of the Necessity of a needy seller, and beat down his Ware much below its real Value? These will certainly witness against you.

H. Why, Sir, after this Rate you condemn all the World. According to your Account, there is not a good Man upon Earth.

M. It is not *my* Account but the Scripture Account: *There is none that doth Good, no not one*, Rom. iii. 12,

H. I am glad then you do not think me worse than my Neighbours. I hope I shall do as well as others, for all are Sinners.

M. Therefore you think you need not be greatly troubled, if you are so too; but hope to pass in the Crowd. Does not some such thought as that lurk at the Bottom? But what signify Numbers with God, whose all-searching Eye no Man can lie concealed from, and whose Arm none can resist or escape? Had you lived in *Sodom* or the old World, this same Thought might have lulled you asleep in the prevailing Abominations, but would not save you from the overflowing *Deluge*, nor the Streams of *Fire*.

H. After this Rate you damn all the World.

M. *Damn*! What a Word is that? It signifies to adjudge to eternal Torments, to do which belongeth only to the Righteous Judge. I would with all my Soul rescue all Men from this Misery. And with that View I now speak plainly and faithfully to you, and agreeably to the Word of God.

H. Who then can be saved? Not you yourself. Pray, Sir, did you never sin?

M. Friend, be serious. The Subject we are now upon is of the utmost Importance. I have sinned as well as you; I have greatly sinned, and my Sins have deserved eternal Damnation: But God hath been pleased to awaken me

to

to Repentance, he hath shewn me my Danger, and stirred me up *to flee from the Wrath to come*. He hath shewn me also the Way of escaping ^{the} Wages of Sin, opened in the *blessed Gospel*. The Tender of Salvation there made I trust I have embraced, and obtained Forgiveness through Faith in JESUS CHRIST.

H. I hope I have repented too: I am sure, if I offend God, I am sorry for it afterwards. And for Faith—why, we are all *Christians*, I hope, are we not?

M. If your *Repentance* is *sincere*, and your *Faith* *lively* and *saving*, your State is safe and happy. But many Persons deceive themselves by a *dead Faith* and *imperfect Repentance*. Are you willing to have the Sincerity of yours tried?

H. I am; for the Trial can do me no Hurt. If I am safe, it is well: if I am not, I hope it is not too late to amend.

M. You say very right. First, then, let us examine your *Repentance*. Now true Repentance implies a Sense of Sin, its Odiousness and Deformity, a Hatred of it, a Humiliation and Selfloathing on Account of it, an actual Forsaking of it, and a Turning to God by Newness of Life. Is your Repentance such as this?

H. I hope it is.

M. *The Wages of Sin is Death*, eternal Death. Do you think you deserve this Death?

H. As much as other Men, for all are Sinners: but God is merciful.

M. Do not now talk of other Men. Do you *A. B.* think that you deserve eternal Death?

H. If God should deal with me according to strict Justice, I do: But, as I think God is merciful, so I hope I shall do well enough.

M. I fear, your Notions of God's Mercy are such as *prevent* true Repentance. You seem to have entertained Hopes of Mercy, without being deeply sensible of your utter Misery without it; to have applied the healing Balsam, before you were wounded. This is what the Almighty stiles *healing the Wound of his People slightly*. Now you seem in this Manner to have deceived yourself. You never saw yourself in a State

of Sin and Death ; you never saw Sin odious ; you were never greatly afraid of perishing, nor saw there was no Help or Strength in yourself ; therefore you never fled to Him that is a *Refuge from the Storm*. And, if you never fled thus to Christ, as helpless and undone without him, it is plain that you are still without any saving Interest in him.

See how it was with those Converts mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles : *Peter's* Hearers were *pricked in their Heart*, and said, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do ?* The *Sailor* came trembling, through a Sense of his miserable Condition before he was baptized, and received Forgiveness of Sins. *Paul* was struck to the Ground.

H. All these were Infidels. I was baptized in my Infancy, and bred up to know good Things, and always believed.

M. God does not deal with all exactly in the same Way. But take heed you do not depend too much upon these Privileges. You were early baptized ; but search your Heart and Life. Have you not lived for a long time together as *without God in the World* ? Instead of *renouncing the World, and Flesh and Devil*, have you not *followed and been led by them* ? Have you not been led by the World in judging of Things according to the Opinions of Men, in Opposition to the Word of God ? Have you not in many Things conformed to its Customs, contrary to the Commands of God ? Have you not frequently obeyed your *carnal Lusts and Inclinations*, so as to violate frequently the pure Law of God, if not by actual Offences, yet by indulging evil Thoughts, and living in lesser Sins without Concern ? And has not the *Devil* been for a considerable Time your Master, leading you to offend God by profaning his holy Name and holy Day ; and that for the sake of such a trifling Pleasure, as plainly argues his Ascendancy over you ? And have you not continued still in these Things with little or no Concern, hoping notwithstanding that all would be well ? Nay, is not this still in some measure your Case ?—I see you acknowledge it is. It is plain then
your

your being baptized in your Infancy avails you nothing, there is an absolute Necessity of turning unto God, and beginning all anew.

H. How must I begin anew?

M. By acknowledging that by your Departure from God you have brought yourself to a *State of Sin and Misery; alienated from God*, inclined to Evil, and therefore at *Enmity with God* in your Heart: that for these Things you deserve his Wrath, and stand on the Brink of Ruin, covered with Guilt.

H. I am willing to forsake all Sin, turn to God, and do better. Will that do?

M. These are good Resolutions, but they do not seem to proceed from a right Principle. You would forsake Sin, and do better, I see, with some secret dependence upon your Amendment and Doings, that these will fit you for Acceptance, and gain you an Interest in CHRIST: But this is a legal Spirit of Self-dependence, a *going about to establish your own Righteousness*. When I see you acknowledge yourself *sinful vile, and base*, and like *Job, abhorring yourself*; when I see you sensible that you are *unworthy* of the least Mercy, and *unable* of yourself to do any good Thing; when I see you *renouncing* your best Deeds as defiled by Sin, casting yourself before God as *lost and helpless*, having no Hope in yourself, but supported only by the Promise of Salvation made in JESUS CHRIST; when this is not only the Language of the Tongue, but these Convictions are deeply impressed on the Heart—When this is your Case, I shall think a Work of Grace is begun in your Soul.

H. Why, this is advising me to *despair*!

M. Indeed I would have you despair of all Help from yourself, or on account of any thing you have done, or can do; for 'till then you will not sufficiently value JESUS CHRIST, not fly to him as your only Saviour, who *came to preach Deliverance to the Captives, and to bind up the Broken-hearted*.

H. I believe all this may be necessary for a *notorious Sinner*, or an *Heathen*; but I have lived in some Fear of God, kept constant to my Place of Worship, and always believed.

M. I doubt you never believed at all, properly speaking : But of this I will talk more with you another Time. At present, it is plain, your *Repentance* has not been *real*. You never saw and felt your Danger, consequently could never be so desirous of escaping it as is necessary. You always flattered yourself with some Hopes that your State was safe, or certainly would be, when you lived a little better ; which was at Bottom depending on yourself. And with respect to the other Branches of Repentance, such as *forsaking Sin*.—It is evident to yourself, you have lived without Concern in some lesser habitual Sins ; and, as for *turning to God*, you were never sensible, that in the *Stream of your Affections*, and the *general Course of your Life*, you were turned from him. Indeed (though you seem not to know it) the ruling Principle in you, and every *natural Man*, is a Principle of Sin and Corruption. Instead of seeking to please God, you have all along been seeking to please yourself ; to procure some Gratification to corrupted Nature, such as sensual Delights, Riches, worldly Esteem, Ease, or the like. This hath been the acting Principle throughout your whole Conduct, instead of obeying that command, *Do all to the Glory of GOD*. Nay, if you search narrowly you will find in your Heart an *Enmity against GOD*. For so saith the Apostle, Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal Mind* (and such is every Man's by Nature) *is Enmity against GOD*. And this *Enmity* shews itself in opposing God's Will, by doing what He hath forbidden, and leaving undone what He hath commanded ; and also in flying from God as your Enemy, and endeavouring to hide yourself from him like *Adam*. Have you not passed Days and Weeks without one serious Thought of God, though you were all that time receiving Mercies at his Hand ? Have you not banished and suppressed such Thoughts, when they have risen in your Mind ? Have you not fled from serious Thoughts of God and Eternity, as Enemies to your Peace, and drowned them in worldly Cares, vain Conversation, and idle Amusements ? Have you not thus fled from God ? You know you have.

Hi-

Hitherto (suffer me to be plain with you) you have gone wrong and have been insensible of your Danger, deceived yourself, and *spoken Peace* to your Soul, *when there was no Peace*. Now consider what you have heard from me, read your Bible, examine yourself, and pray unto God to give you a Sense of your real State, and a right Judgment in all Things.

D I A L O G U E II.

M. I Was in Hopes of seeing you before now, *Farmer*, that we might have an Opportunity of talking together again on the same important Subject.

H. Indeed, Sir, if I may make so bold, I must say I did not like what you said so well, as to desire to hear any more of it. And I should not have come to you now, had it not been for something I heard in your Sermon Yesterday.

M. I like your honest Plainness very well, Neighbour. But what was it I offended you in?

H. I thought you *bore too hard* upon me, and I was afraid you would make me *melancholy*.

M. Do not you think that what I said proceeded from Love to your Soul?

H. I really believe it did.

M. Do you think I said any Thing that was not true?

H. I did think so then. You seemed to judge too hardly of me, and to put me on a Level with the worst of Men. But I am now convinced that what you said was all true.

M. What has produced this Change of your Sentiments?

H. Your Yesterday's Sermon about the Day of Judgment. I have been very uneasy ever since I heard it. For I am greatly afraid, that, if the Day of Judgment was now to come, it would find me unprepared. And then—the LORD have Mercy upon my poor Soul!

M. It would be too late then to cry and hope for Mercy. But what was it particularly that made you form such a Judgment of yourself?

H.

H. You shewed us, from the twenty-fifth Chapter of *St. Matthew*, that Judgment *begins* with a Separation of the *Godly* from the *Wicked*; and this Separation was owing to a Separation made in this Life, when the righteous were taken from among the *Wicked* by leaving the Works and the Society of the *Ungodly*. I was not sensible any such Change had been wrought in me, and am therefore afraid I am still in the State of Sin, in which, you told us, all Men are by Nature.

M. You have great Reason to be afraid. I told you that those would be esteemed *Righteous* on that Day, who had fled to the Lord JESUS CHRIST for righteousness to justify them, and had been made holy by the Spirit of GOD, creating in them a *new Heart*, and had evidenced this Change by an holy Conversation thro' the remaining Part of their Life, how many or great soever their Sins had been; And that the *Wicked* were those that had lived and died without Faith in CHRIST, and the Indwelling of GOD's Spirit, however orderly and decent their Conduct was.

H. Ay, that was it that terrified *me*. You told us that the most upright Man had committed Sins enow to condemn him, if he died without an Interest in CHRIST, and without being accepted as righteous through *him*. But if this Mercy and Acceptance through JESUS CHRIST were obtained before Death, no Man's Sins would be remembred against him on that Day. And to prove this, you shewed us, that in the Proceeding of the last Day, as related by *St. Matthew*, no Sins of the Righteous are mentioned by the Judge, nor any good Deeds of the *Wicked*.

M. The *Wicked*, that is, they that lived and died without an humbling Sense of their natural Corruption and actual Sins, so as never by Faith to fly for Refuge to GOD's Mercy in CHRIST, have, properly speaking, no good Works to be mentioned, for all they do is from a wrong Principle; either for selfish and wordly Ends, or in order to be accepted on account of their *Doings*; which is seeking Salvation *by the Law of Works*. On this Account their Works are not regarded, being not *done in Faith*;

Faith; that is, not proceeding from an Union with CHRIST by Faith *without whom we can do nothing* acceptable in God's Sight, *John xv. 5.* On the other hand, the *Righteous* being themselves accepted through CHRIST, their Sins are not mentioned, because long before forgiven and blotted out: And their imperfect Services being accepted through JESUS their High Priest, who bears the Iniquity of their *holy Things*, receive at the Hands of the bountiful Judge a Reward of Grace. So that That which principally distinguishes the Godly from the Ungodly, is, that the one is accepted as righteous, and has obtained Forgiveness through CHRIST, according to the New or Gospel Covenant; The other, never being deeply sensible of his sinful lost State (indeed too proud to acknowledge it) hath not applied for the Mercy represented in the Gospel, and so at the Day of Judgment stands on his own Bottom, without a Mediator, and without Forgiveness, and therefore must be condemned.

H. But then why are Works mentioned at all on that Day, as we find they are?

M. I gave you two Reasons for this. *First*, Because though they are not the Ground of any Man's Acceptance, yet they shew a Man to be in a justified State; for we cannot bear the Fruit of Holiness, unless we are in and abide in CHRIST. *John xv. 4.* And they that do not act righteously deceive themselves, if they think themselves righteous: So that good Works serve to distinguish Believers and Unbelievers. *Secondly*, Because the different Degrees of Fruitfulness make a Difference between the Godly themselves, so that God is pleased graciously to confer upon them different Degrees of Glory. That any Man is at all saved is owing to his Faith in the Redeemer: His Degree of Glory is proportioned to his Fruitfulness and Diligence in the Vineyard.

H. I always thought that we Christians were all Believers, one as much as another: And that at the Day of Judgment They would be reckoned Godly that lived *orderly* and *uprightly*, among whom I reckoned myself and all that were better than I; and that the Profane and Ungodly, and all that were *secretly wicked* and *ill-designed*, would be condemned. Indeed I had always

some Fears that I was not *good enough*; I did not know how great a Number would be acknowledged righteous; but I thought I stood a better Chance than many, or most that I knew.

M. You did not learn this from the Word of God. But what think you now?

H. I see that all depends upon my obtaining, whilst on Earth, Mercy and Forgiveness of all that is past; and that not on account of any thing done by me, but thro' Faith in JESUS CHRIST. But what that Faith is I know not: This I know, that I have been all along out of the Way.

M. Indeed I think you have; and it is high Time for you to awake, and seek the LORD in Earnest, lest He cut you off in the midst of your Sins, appoint you your Portion *where is Weeping, and Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth.*

H. Pray Sir, tell me *what I must do to be saved?*

M. What think you of your past Life?

H. I see that I have been daily offending God by breaking his commandments, and pleasing myself, not *him*; and that now I stand under the Guilt of Thousands of Sins, the least of which were enough to condemn me.

M. What think you of your *good Deeds*?

H. I have none to think about. I see Sin in every thing I do. My *Pride* on account of my being not so bad as others, my *Worldiness*, my *Vanity*, and *trifling Spirit* in Prayer and hearing Sermons, were enough to condemn me, if I had done nothing else.

M. And what do you intend to do?

H. I will do better, I will strive against Sin, I will pray.

M. But all these Duties, you say, have been heretofore mixed with Sin; how then do you hope they will make you accepted now? Or could you do these Things ever so well, all is your necessary bounden Duty: The good Deeds you shall do, cannot make Amends for past Offences. On all these Accounts, *by the Deeds of the Law shall no Man living be justified.*

H. I see no Way—If ever there was a lost Soul, I am he. What shall I do?

M. Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST and thou shalt be saved, Acts xvi. 13. This is the Work of God,

that ye believe on him whom he hath sent, John vi. 29, And by him all that believe are justified from all Things. Acts xiii. 39. Come, naked, sinful, and helpless as ye are, to God through CHRIST for Mercy. He is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God thro' him, seeing he hath died for them, and ever liveth to make Intercession for them, Heb. vii. 25. He can wash you from the Guilt of all your Sins, destroy the Power and Dominion of Sin in you, sanctify you thoroughly in Body, Soul, and Spirit, and present you to the Father without Spot or Blemish.

H. I have no manner of Doubt of CHRIST's Power to save, for He is the Son of God. But I fear I am not a fit Person to be saved.

M. In order to determine that, look into your Bible. There this Tender of Salvation is made: CHRIST JESUS came into the World, to save Sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. Now what think you? Are you of the Number He came to save, or not?

H. But He will not, He does not save all Sinners.

M. That is because they will not come to him, to be saved. Of this He complains, John, v. 40. Ye will not come to me, that ye may have Life.

H. But is it not said repent and believe the Gospel, which I fear I do not.

M. If you are Weary with the Burden of Sin, loath it, and earnestly desire to be saved from the Guilt and Pollution of it, true Repentance is begun in you. And if for this Purpose you apply unto CHRIST, as held forth to poor sensible Sinners in the Gospel, this is the Faith that saveth.

H. It is said, Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able: and, Not every one that saith unto me, LORD! LORD! shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This makes me fear, and keep at a Distance.

M. Whither then do you intend to go?

H. I know no Place; for there is no other Name under Heaven whereby one may be saved.

M. Then fly to CHRIST—to escape the Wages of Sin, the Curse of the Law, and the Wrath of God: Fly to him for Pardon and Peace, Grace and Glory. And, if seeking to enter into the Kingdom is not enough, Arise. If many that say, LORD! LORD! fail, let this

be the Language of your Heart and Life, as well as of the Tongue. Not that, after all, any Diligence and Strength of yours is the Thing that will gain Acceptance. But when Faith is *true, lively*, and, *saving* it will be attended with these and the like Words.

H. This is what I fear, that my Faith is not *true Faith*.

M. If your Faith is *true Faith*, you will have Confidence in nothing in yourself, no Works or Strength of your own; but you will rely solely on God's Promise of Mercy made in CHRIST. A *true Faith* will also in some Degree be *lively*, shewing itself in a Zeal for God and Godliness, and a steady Warfare against Sin. And this will be also *saving*: You will be thereby saved not only from guilt, but from the Power of Sin, and the Dominion of your Lusts; and this will give you a good Hope and Expectation, and by Degrees a firm Persuasion, of being saved from Wrath in the great Day of the LORD JESUS.

H. I cannot find I have this Faith: therefore dare not believe that God will forgive and receive me.

M. Then come unto CHRIST, embrace and depend on God's Promises in him, that your Faith may grow up to this. For this Faith itself is *of the Operation of the spirit of God*, and therefore to be sought of him by Prayer through the Mediation of JESUS CHRIST.

H. I dare not thus embrace the Promises, come to and depend on CHRIST, for I am utterly *unworthy* of the least Mercy.

M. When do you think you shall make yourself worthy;

H. Never.

M. Then come to him just as you are, to be made worthy.

H. May I dare thus to come to CHRIST, and depend upon him for Salvation?

M. Do not depend upon my Word, but hear the Word of God. He invites you to come: *Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters*, Isa. lv. 1. He commands you to come: *This is his Commandment, that we should believe on the Name of his Son JESUS CHRIST*. He promises to receive those that come: *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast off*, John vi. 37. He

threatens if you do not come: *He that believeth not shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16.

M. But to whom are these Words addressed?

H. To you, to me, and to every one that hears them. *Preach the Gospel to every Creature*, Mark xvi. 15. They are addressed to those in particular, that see their Want of Salvation, because they alone will receive them. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest*. Matt. xi. 28.

H. These Arguments from Scripture stop my Mouth, But still I cannot believe CHRIST will receive such a Sinner as I am.

M. This is what I said before: Faith is not of Man but the Gift of God, wrought by the SPIRIT in them that hear the Gospel. Therefore seek this and every other Grace of God by Prayer, in the Name of JESUS, And, to encourage you in this, consider that God gave CHRIST for this very Purpose, *to save Sinners*: For this He came into the World; for this He laboured, wept, and bled; for this He reigns and intercedes in Heaven. He is so far from being unwilling to save, that He is offended with them, when they will not come to him to be saved. When he was upon Earth, He wept over *Jerusalem* on this Account.

H. I know not what to say.

M. What do you intend to do?

H. I am greatly afraid I shall never be saved. But I know there is no other Way but God's free Mercy in CHRIST. Therefore will I seek it as long as I live; and if I perish, it shall be at the Foot of CHRIST'S Cross, calling for Mercy.

M. Continue this Resolution, and all the precious Promises in the Gospel are your own. But take heed that you do not suffer these Impressions to wear away, and so settle in a false Peace. Do not seek Rest anywhere but in CHRIST. Beware, lest worldly Cares or Pleasures divert your Attention from the Things of God and lest Sin grieve the HOLY SPIRIT. Remember it is said, *If any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him*.

D I A L O G U E III.

M. SIR, I hope you will not be offended at the Trouble I give you: But I want your Advice very much.

H. You need make no Compliments, *Farmer*. I should be glad, if all the People that attend on my Ministry would give me the same Trouble you do. But what is the Matter?

M. I have been for some Time so as I was never in my Life before: I have been afraid I should be damned. This hath filled me with Thoughts and Fears Day and Night. You had no Need to caution me against the Danger of worldly Cares and Pleasures: For, wherever I was, or whatever I have been doing, my Sins and Hell have been still before my Eyes.

H. What have you thought of your Sins? In what Light have they appeared to you?

M. Sins committed many Years ago have now risen in my Mind, and condemned me. The Remembrance of the Sins of my Youth has followed me, as if committed but Yesterday. And some hard Scriptures, that I have heard and read, seem to be Sentences of my Condemnation. I believe I have thought an hundred Times of these Words: *The Wages of Sin is Death*.

H. Have you been looking into your Heart, and seen and lamented the Corruption there?

H. I did not use to understand what you meant by *looking into the Heart*; but I think I do now. I find in myself a strong Inclination to many Sins, notwithstanding that I am convinced in my Mind that I deserve God's Wrath on account of complying with these Inclinations heretofore. Indeed it is much better with me now than it was. Formerly I have been led by my own wicked Heart to delight in idle Company; to talk of myself in an empty vain Manner; to be greedy after the World; to pass slightly over, or entirely neglect Prayer and other Duties, as a tedious Burden; and to be guilty of other Sins. At present, I bless God, it is not so; but all my Thoughts are in a manner, taken up about the Care of my Soul, and World to come.

M, I fear, you do not know your Heart as well as you imagine. You seem to think that *all Things are already become new* in you. But be not deceived: Such a Cage of unclean Birds, as the Heart of every Man is

by Nature, is not so soon cleansed from its various Lusts and vile Affections. These, that seem to be rooted out, are only asleep for a Season ; Be watchful therefore ; they will one Day awake again. Some of them probably are only exchanged for others as bad and dangerous, such as *Pride, Presumption*, and the like.

H. Really, Sir, I have had some Fear of that. For you must know, that one Day I was thinking what a sinful Wretch I was, and what would become of me in the next World ; when these Words came strongly into my Mind *I will heal their Backsliding, I will love them freely*. I am sure they are somewhere in the Bible, but I cannot find them. However, they gave me much Comfort, and I have been very easy ever since. Now a Neighbour, that I have been talking with, tells me, " This is to be looked on as a Word from God," and that I am henceforth to look on myself as a converted Man. But I fear this would be Presumption. Now what do you think of this ?

M. I must desire some Time to resolves this Question ; seven Years, at least, before I can give a positive Answer to it.

The Words you mentioned are in the Prophet *Hosea*, xiv. 4. They were perhaps spoken more immediately of the Restoration of the captive *Jews* ; But they contain a sweet Promise perfectly in the Gospel Strain, and are therefore free for every humble Soul to embrace by Faith. The Prophet you see at Verse 1, 2, 3, exhorts the People to Repentance and Humiliation for Sin : *O Israel, return unto the LORD thy GOD ; for thou hast fallen by Iniquity. Take with you Words, and turn to the LORD. Say unto him, Take away all Iniquity, and receive us graciously. — For in thee the Fatherless findeth Mercy*. Now, as GOD hath given you a Sense of your sinful helpless State, and a Desire of turning to him, like this which the prophet here describes as preparatory to an Answer of Peace, I hope the following Promise belongs to you : *I will heal their Backsliding, I will love them freely ; for mine Anger is turned away from him*, Verse 4. I hope too, that Comfort, which you found in applying the Promise to yourself by a particular Faith, proceeded from the Spirit of God : In the same Manner as I look on that Conviction of Sin, which

filled you with Fear and Self-abasement, when you called to Mind your Sinfulness and God's Judgment denounced against Sinners to be the Work of the same Spirit. For it is He that *convinceth the World of Sin and of Righteousness*. But this I must tell you: All these Feelings are to be suspected, 'till we see what Fruit follows in the Hearts and Life. For, though these are sometimes owing to the Spirit of God, and come well recommended, when, as in your Case, they are so closely connected with the Word of God: yet *the Enemy of Souls* sometimes imitates these sensible Experiences in order to deceive. And it is impossible to say how much our natural Temper and Spirits may contribute thereto.

H. Pray, Sir, tell me plainly, what you think of my State.

M. Satan, I tell you, sometimes puts on the *Appearance of an Angel of Light* in order to deceive. Those sensible Experiences sometimes vouchsafed by the Spirit of God, and Impressions made on Men's Minds, of which Sort are what the Scriptures term *Peace in believing*, and *Joy in the Holy Ghost*,—these the *Enemy* sometimes imitates, and thereby deludes Hypocrites into spiritual Pride, and even the Godly sometimes, so as to *puff* them up, and make them secure and careless. But there are two Tokens of Grace, which the Devil will not, cannot effect; These are an holy Heart steadily hating Sin; and an holy Life, having respect to all God's Commandments. Have these, and evidence the one by the other; and continue for some considerable Time thus to adorn your Profession.--Then I shall not have the least Doubt but you are in a State of Grace.

H. As far as I know my own Heart, I would not willingly offend God for the whole World. I love those that seem to be his Servants, and would go upon my Hands and Knees to do them Good, or to make others like them. I love to hear his Word, to pray, and talk of good Things; and, I think, I could die with Pleasure, if it was his Will.

M. Very well. These are good Signs. But this is the Fervour of your *first Love*. It will not always be so with you. So was it with the *Israelites* after pas-

sing the Red Sea, the *Galatians*, and the Church of *Ephesus*. But each of these grew colder afterwards : And the Prophet *Jeremiah* ii. 2. *St. Paul*, *Gal.* iv. 15. and our LORD, *Rev.* ii. 4. reprove them for it.

H. Sir, I believe you know my Danger better than I do myself. Pray direct me what I shall do.

M. *Strive to make your Calling and Election sure and evident both to yourself and others, by bringing forth the Fruits of Righteousness in a good Conversation.*

My first advice is, *Be humble, and walk humbly with thy God.* Let the Remembrance of your past Life of Sin and Folly still cover you with Shame. Recollect the many aggravating Circumstances of a Life hitherto spent in Rebellion against God ; during all which he daily heaped Mercies upon you and yours ; giving Food and Raiment, Health and Strength ; and continued these Mercies to you, while you forgot the Hand that gave them, and returned Evil for Good. He *spared* you in all your Provocations ; and at last opened your Eyes to see your Danger, stirred you up to avoid it, and now hath given you a good Hope thro' Grace of obtaining eternal Life. Thus compare together what God hath done and you deserved, and thus learn *Humility*. Keep a watchful Eye also upon the Remains of indwelling Sin still in you. And let every sinful Inclination, vain Thought, Backwardness to Duty, and Failure in it, teach you to be humble and fear. Thus, distrusting yourself look up to God for continual Support, like an helpless little Child ; expecting, through the Mediation of JESUS CHRIST, to be assisted in every Time of Need. My next Advice is, *Keep a Conscience void of Offence.* If you have wronged any Man be not ashamed to acknowledge it ; and according to your Power make Restitution ; that the accursed Thing may not cleave unto you. Take heed that *grieve not the Spirit* of GOD by unholy Walking, lest you *provoke him to forsake you*. To this End, watch over your Heart, repress its first Inclinations to Sin, and be watchful against Temptations from without ; fixing your Eye especially on the Sin with which you have heretofore been *most easily beset*. If at any Time Sin prevail against you, do not endeavour to forget it, or *bide it in your Bosom* : But go to GOD immediately ; take Shame to yourself ; plead the Gospel Promises to returning Sinners looking unto JESUS CHRIST as your

all-sufficient Sacrifice, and *Advocate with the Father*; and never cease wrestling with God in Prayer, until he again speak Peace to your troubled Soul, and fill you with a greater Fear of offending him. As I hope you are now planted in God's Vineyard, *Be fruitful*. Bear on your Heart a Sense of God's Love to Sinners in JESUS CHRIST. Consider in particular what God hath done for you, in *calling you out of Darkness into his marvellous Light*. Remember how you lay fast asleep in Sin and fatal Security, when God awaked you to see your Danger and escape it. Think what would have been your Condition in Eternity, if God had left you to yourself. Think how many still go on in the same fatal Path in which you trod. And let the Sense of God's distinguishing Love to you excite you to some Return. *Love him, because he first loved you*. And let Love to your heavenly Father influence your *Thoughts, and Words, and actions*.

Let your *Meditations* of God be sweet and frequent. Lift up your Heart to Him *that seeth in secret, and trieth the Hearts and reins*. Seek a close Communion with the *Father of your Spirit*: And to this End endeavour to withdraw your Thoughts from worldly Things, and to raise your Affections from Earth to Heaven, to those Things which are not seen but by the Eyes of Faith: That thus you may *walk my Faith*, guided by it as the Eye of the Soul, and raised by it to *Heavenly mindedness*; so as to love and delight in God.

Instead of your former vain *Conversation*, henceforth let your Tongue be employed to God's Glory; in *speaking Good of his Name*; in Prayer and Praise to your great Benefactor; in telling others *what He hath done for your Soul*; in warning Sinners of their Danger, and encouraging them that fear God to be bold and hearty in his Service. And let your *Conduct in Life* be such as becometh the Gospel. You are called to *fight the good Fight of Faith*, see that you *faint not*, neither be *weary in Well-doing*. Shew that you are *alive unto God by living unto God*, by devoting yourself to his Service, and by Diligence therein. Do something for him that hath done so much for you. Be loving unto all Men, for they are the Work of God's Hands: Do Good unto all Men according to your Ability. Your Time and Strength and every other Talent, are given you to be improved,

lay them out in Acts of Charity and Love. Let your Heart be enlarged to all Men, not excepting your Enemies: Let these have your Prayes and Forgiveness, and be ready to *overcome Evil by Good*.

See also that you shew the Power of Godliness in the conscientious Discharge of *Relative Duties*. Be kindly affectionate and tender-hearted to all about you. To those of your Family shew yourself an Example of Gentleness, Love and Forbearance. Express your Regard for their Souls as well as for their Bodies, by a devout serious Course of Family-Worship. Let those of your Household and Acquaintance see that you have a *new Heart* by your leading a *new Life*, studying in all Things to be conformed to the Will and Word of God. Be strict and conscientious in all Dealings. *Render to all their Dues, Tribute to whom Tribute, and Custom to whom Custom is due*, as well as every other lawful Debt: not defrauding either the King or your Fellow-Subjects, nor any way encouraging those that do.

Shew a particular Regard for *them that are of the Household of Faith*, all the sincerely Godly, for Christ's Sake. For as all Men were originally created after God's Image, in *them* is this Image in some Measure restored. These therefore in a peculiar Manner belong to Christ, being washed from their Sins in his Blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. And to animate you to greater Diligence in this Work and Labour of Love, view often with the Eyes of Faith the glorious Reward set before you, the eternal Weight of Glory to bestowed on that Day when CHRIST shall reward Acts of Mercy and Love, done in his Name, as if done to Himself.

Quickened by this Principle and encouraged by this Prospect, strive to grow in Knowledge, and Purity, and Faith, and Love, and godly Fear; in Meekness, and every Christian Grace. Study to promote God's Glory, the Welfare of all Men, and such a Disposition in your own Soul, as may render you *meet to be a Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. And, in order to promote this Work of Sanctification in you, wait for God's Blessing and Grace in a conscientious Use of the Ordinances, in Prayer, public, and private, in hearing and reading God's Word, and in every known Duty. Thus may you hope to be a fruitful Vine, and experience in your Soul

those Blessings, which the Prophet immediatly adds to that Promise of free Mercy, in which you have found so much Consolation. *Hosea xiv, 5, 6, 7, I will be at the Dew unto Israel: He shall grow is the Lily, and cast forth his Roots as Lebanon; growing upwards by Faith and Love, and downwards by Humility. His Branches shall spread; and his Beauty shall be as the Olive-Tree, and his Smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his Shadow shall return from all their Wanderings. They shall revive as the Corn, and grow as the Vine. The Scent (or Blossom) thereof shall be as the Vine of Lebanon. beautiful, fruitful, and pleasant in God's Sight.*

H. Sir, I thank you. I see a great Work before me: but, by God's Help, I hope I shall be able to hold out to the End.

M. You must expect many Difficulties and much Opposition. The Way to Heaven is the Way of the Cross, and *through much Tribulation. The World and Flesh and Devil are strong Enemies, and they are closely leagued together. Your own corrupt Nature will be always near to tempt, discourage, and draw you back; for this will still be your burden, your greatest Plague will be that of your own Heart. And, as soon as you appear to be going out of the broad Way, in which the Generality walk to Destruction, you must expect the World will be upon you. Not only the Careless and Profane will sneer and ridicule you, but the more decent Formalists also will be highly offended. They will say in their Hearts, as the pharisees of old, In doing this, in going out of the common fashionable Road, and pretending to uncommon Strictness, thou condemnest us also. And these his two Aillies, the World and the Flesh, the Devil can manage with wonderful Skill, and sometimes throw in some evil Thoughts himself. But be not discouraged: God is above all. Christ ever liveth to make Intercession for us, and to save in every Difficulty those that come unto God thro' him. Holy Angels will be employed as your Guardians; and all the truly Godly will be your loving Brethren and ready Friends. They that are for you, are more than they that are against you. Be not your own Enemy, and nothing can hurt you, However. Be not high-minded, but fear. Happy is the Man that feareth always.*

The E N D.



